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pecting trips into the desert mountains of southern Arizona and northern Sonora. In those days the Apaches were a constant danger in that region and Mr. Brown and his companions had a number of narrow escapes from them, as well as from death by thirst on the arid plains. Later he became interested in newspaper work in Tucson and for many years was reporter, editor or owner of various journals there, and was one of the best known and respected men among the pioneers of the community. He had the instincts of a born naturalist and was a keen observer of nature long before he gained any definite knowledge of the subject.

In 1883 I spent several months in Tucson and within a short time after my arrival met Herbert Brown. He expressed the greatest pleasure to have the opportunity to learn something about birds, saying that he had always been much interested in them but had never before met anyone who could give him any information on the subject. He soon learned to make good skins and became an enthusiastic field collector, making trips whenever he could spare a little time from confining duties. He soon came to know local birds very well and made a collection of skins which later he presented, with other scientific material, to the Museum of the University of Arizona.

He told me of having seen "Bob-White" quail on grassy plains south of Tucson during some of his early trips, and as a result of my interest in the matter he afterwards secured and sent to Mr. Ridgway the first specimen of the bird afterwards described as *Colinus ridgwayi*. Some years later while Superintendent of the prison at Yuma, he collected the type of the mountain lion frequenting the delta of the Colorado, *Felis aztecus browni* Merriam. The common name of *Melospiza melodia rivularis*—Brown's Song Sparrow of Lower California—was dedicated to him by his friend, Walter E. Bryant.

I found in Herbert Brown a warm-hearted friend and delightful companion. He enjoyed doing kindly acts for others, and so had many friends among both scientific and non-scientific men. He was curator of the Museum of the University of Arizona from the time it was founded, and, in addition, at the time of his death, he was President of the Audubon Society of Arizona and Clerk of the Superior Court of Pima County.—E. W. NELSON.

## COMMUNICATION

### COLLECTING IN PERU

Editor THE CONDOR:

Again calling to mind that long postponed promise to write to you, I lay aside a couple of finished lapwings, push still farther away a waiting grebe and ibis, and commence. We are in the shooting lodge of the Cerro de Pasco Mining and Railway Company, located on the "Roof of the World", to use the language of the railway folders. We are at

13,000 feet elevation here, and the snow-capped Andes just across the lake seem only small hills, as compared to the view of them from the seaward side.

Perhaps the most interesting view to us is the early morning outlook from the door. In the foreground is the flock of llamas that come to roost every evening about 100 yards from the door. Then a gentle slope of a mile to the lake, smooth as glass and with a flock of feeding flamingos on the edge; beyond that the abruptly rising mountains, capped with snow and showing clear-cut against the sky. During the day the llamas feed down to the lake, so that when snipe shooting one has to be careful that a llama is not incidentally in range. The carrying power of a charge of powder is seemingly much greater here than at sea level, for I have made some shots that I would not even have attempted below. A couple of flamingos were stopped last night from a flock that must have been from eighty to a hundred yards away. It seems somewhat odd to see flamingos standing in a pond being peppered with hail stones, but it frequently happens here. One's remembrance of wading into tropical lagoons after them, with nothing on but drawers and undershirt, fades slowly from mind when they fly past with the snow-covered hills a mile away, and a cold sleety drizzle chilling one as he sits in a boat watching them.

And the mudhens! How changed from the familiar California mudhen. The first one I shot seemed so much bigger than ours, though of the same general appearance, that I supposed I had in hand the Giant Mudhen that is listed as occurring in Peru; but some days later, while slowly rowing along an island bordered with tules, a really big mudhen rose from the edge and flew out onto the lake. It looked so big when rising and flapping on the water that I would have shot, but my wife's head being in the way, refrained, and so was compelled to row after it when it settled a half mile out on the choppy lake.

Before I got to it, though going down the wind, I was puffing worse than I used to do on the choppy sea off Point Pinos when chasing a pair of Xantus Murrelets that would persist in swimming as fast as I could make the boat travel, until I was thoroughly wind-ed, when they would turn broadside on and show a pair of shark fins in place of the coveted murrelets. But I got this mudhen, and another yesterday, and giants they are! While not as large as a *large* honker, they will certainly surpass the majority of the geese that winter in California. And tough skinned! I'd sooner skin an eagle. I skinned the first one but my cholo assistant skins any others that we get. The middle toe and claw of the one



skinned today measured  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches, and looked more.

Talking of big things, as the right of a Californian, the frogs here are certainly in that category. When talking with the manager of the company in Lima, he told me that they were as big as my head. His secretary later told me that they stretched three feet or so from tip to tip; then a conductor on the road had measured one that went twenty-six inches from one toe-tip to another, but when I saw my first one in the lake I believed them all. It came to the surface, stuck up a head like a turtle's, took a breath the same way, and slowly swam downward as we rowed over the spot. Had I had a boat hook I verily believe that it could have been hauled to the surface, as many a turtle has been, with the hook caught under the chin.

. . . Land birds are few. One yellow finch with a pleasant voice wakes us every morning, singing close by the window. It seems somewhat strange to find a species of woodpecker common up here in the treeless and shrubless hilltops, but one is often seen, calling from some rocky point or flying off over the hillsides.

We expect soon to get back to sea level, where shearwaters, petrels and boobies will take the place of flamingos, ibises and mud-hens.

Sincerely,

R. H. BECK.

Lake Jurin, Peru, April 17, 1913.

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

A "CHECK LIST OF THE BIRDS OF THE SEQUOIA AND GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL PARKS."—A briefly annotated list with the above title appears in a 24-page circular of "General Information Regarding Sequoia and General Grant National Parks," issued from the Office of the Secretary, Department of the Interior. This list has been printed, in almost identical form save for typographical errors, in the circular for at least the past two seasons, to the reviewer's knowledge, 1912 and 1913, pages 7 to 15 in the former, 10 to 17 in the latter.

The list is notable for its length, 184 species being enumerated. The annotations are limited to one- to six-word comments upon seasonal status and relative abundance. The contribution is further striking in the large proportion of improbable occurrences, this furnishing the stimulus for the present critical review.

A provoking thing about the list is its presentation in a government publication, showing unmistakable evidences of having passed the official scrutiny of ornithological authorities at Washington. And yet it has

failed of that censorship which must ever be exercised in regard to the output of amateur observers, if our literature is to be kept up to scientific standard.

We note a number of generic names as well as subspecific combinations, which give no hint of derivation from the standard A. O. U. *Check-List*. The tell-tale *Tyto* (for the Barn Owl) with little doubt in our minds emanates from a certain Washington office. Other significant evidence is afforded by *Balanosphyra*, *Accipiter velox pacificus*, *Horizopus*, and *Sayornis nigricans semiater*. In fact the guilt for allowing such a questionable lot of records to slip into print would seem not difficult to fix!

The two parks named are in the Sierra Nevada of Tulare and Fresno counties, California. The more dubious of the records are as follows: *Florida caerulea*, "rare winter visitant" (no previous record for California!); *Zamelodia ludoviciana*, "very rare"; *Sialia mexicana anabelae*, "very rare summer resident"; *Dendroica occidentalis*, "winter migrant"; *Chaetura vauxi*, "summer resident"; *Pipilo maculatus californica*, "common resident"; *Junco oreganus shufeldti*, "winter migrant" (no satisfactory record for the State!); *Bombycilla cedrorum*, "common summer resident"; *Pipilo maculatus montanus*, "winter visitant"; *Aimophila ruficeps ruficeps*, "winter visitant".

The list is stated to have been "compiled and identified by Walter Fry, ranger in charge." The reviewer has corresponded with Mr. Fry at some length in an effort to secure scientifically acceptable verifications of some of the more important identifications. The information was elicited that either the "species in the list were determined by sight identification at very close range," or that specimens were shot but in no case saved—an extremely unfortunate circumstance, especially as regards the "Little Blue Heron."

It should here be stated that the author of the list is well known to be an efficient officer, and a man or more than ordinary acumen as an observer; but even so, who of us would trust himself to put upon record such extraordinary things unless backed up by specimens preserved?

Is it not incumbent upon naturalists in authority, especially those in connection with the governmental departments, to properly edit, or otherwise render innocuous, the contributions from enthusiastic amateurs? The latter are increasing in numbers—a very desirable thing—but our science will suffer just in proportion as their questionable observations are allowed to assume apparently authentic position in our literature.—J. GRINNELL.